

ANWAR REBUTS CRITICS OF TRUMP MEETING

It gave me a chance to raise key issues, including Israel's attacks on Gaza, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday hit back at critics who questioned the decision to invite United States President Donald Trump to the 47th Asean Summit.

Anwar said his discussion with Trump was held privately, giving him an opportunity to raise key issues, including Israel's attacks on Gaza.

"Some people say, 'Why discuss with President Trump?' But those who criticise do not know that our discussion was private — a genuine, heart-to-heart, four-eyes meeting between him and me.

"We can shout here, but people are dying in Gaza, bombed and killed. We have condemned Israel and expressed anger at the United States.

"This was the opportunity to meet. Now, at the very least, the attacks have stopped and the conquest of the West Bank, prohibited," he said at a press conference.

Present were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan and Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz.

Anwar said while welcoming Phase One of Trump's peace plan for Gaza, he also urged a comprehensive and lasting solution, one that guaranteed the rights of Palestinians and ensures these atrocities never happen again.

He said some kept turning the Gaza issue into a political drama, which he described as a "cheap stunt".

Though he was invited by Trump to ride in his presidential car, "The Beast", Anwar said he was not deluded just because he sat next to the US president.

"Diplomatic relations do not necessarily mean shouting loudly in public.

"What is important is that I am



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim giving his press conference at the closing of the 47th Asean Summit in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

With him is Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, IMSTP PIC BY

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represented to speak for Malaysia, and I spoke to defend the interests of Palestinians and Gaza.

"Later, during Malaysia's bilateral meeting with the US, led by Tengku Zafrul, we said thank you (for the peace plan), but we stressed that the proposed 20-point plan was not comprehensive enough, as it did not mention Palestine and the West Bank."

He said he reiterated the same position during the Asean-US Summit on Sunday, held in the presence of Trump and other Asean leaders.

"There is no need to support me, but please support Malaysia's stance in every statement I make."

He said Malaysia had maintained a moderate and central stance, as reflected in the 47th Asean Summit and Related Summits, demonstrating its ability to engage and build friendships with all parties.

"To me, the decisions we make are those that protect the country's image and serve the national interest — economically, in terms of investment, and most importantly, benefit the people.

"When we maintain good relations with other countries, traders, tourists and investors come here — and that benefits the people."

He said this was why Malaysia continued to participate in such

platforms, which also included representatives from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Asean Plus Three Macroeconomic Research Office, the Asean Business Advisory Council and prominent educational institutions.

He said Asean, under Malaysia's chairmanship, had signed the Asean-China Free Trade Agreement 3.0 Upgrade — the first upgrade under Asean.

"I am proud that Malaysia's name is now held in high regard.

"If we were afraid of the US, it would have been impossible for us to sign only with China, especially a day after President Donald Trump left the country.

"This reflects the wisdom of our diplomacy. Not just mine, but that of all our colleagues who have worked well together."

A significant development during Malaysia's Asean chairmanship, he said, was the inclusion of Timor-Leste as the 11th member.

"As Asean chair, I do not judge countries based on their wealth or status.

"We build friendships out of respect for nations and the dignity of their people.

"It is just like in a family — some members may be poor, others more well-off — but we maintain those bonds regardless."